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# INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Written statement*/ submitted by Human Rights Advocates, Inc.,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2001]

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*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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ENG

1. Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual slavery is a flagrant human rights violation occurring worldwide. When a woman or child is trafficked or sexually exploited, they are denied the most basic human rights, and in many cases, denied their right to life.

2. Trafficking in persons has been condemned by the United Nations and other international and regional groups as well as scores of domestic legislative efforts. The first international anti-trafficking convention was adopted in 1904, but today, nearly 100 years later, the numbers of women and children trafficked in this hideous trade has only escalated with no signs of slowing. The 1995 Beijing Women's Conference[1] increased public international awareness about the sex trade, and yet the United Nations estimates that 4 million people are trafficked each year,[2] resulting in a $7 billion profit to criminal groups.[3] Trafficking in women and children arguably has the highest profit margin and lowest risk of almost any type of illegal activity. In the past decade, an estimated 30 million women and children may have been trafficked in and from South-East Asia for sexual exploitation and sweatshop labor.[4]

3. The flow of human traffic generally runs from poor to rich countries, from the south and east to the north and west. Countries of the former Soviet Union have become traffickers' latest targets, due in part to faltering economic systems and hyperinflation having destroyed many families' financial security.[5] Trafficking has become a gold mine for traffickers in Ukraine, where women account for over 60% of those who lost their jobs in recent years.[6] Lured by false promises and information, many women fall prey to unscrupulous traffickers who exploit the economically vulnerable.

4. The efficient, brutal routine endured by trafficked women and children rarely varies in the dozens of countries where trafficking and sexual slavery occurs. Women are held in apartments, bars and makeshift brothels. They are beaten, drugged, starved, and raped into submission. Fifteen-year-old prostitutes in Bangkok service an average of 14 clients a day. They are held captive by debt bondage, violence, and fear. Few ever testify against their traffickers and those who do often risk death. In 1998 in Istanbul,

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[1] United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Declaration and Platform for Action, 35 I.L.M. 401 (1996).

[2] *Advancement of Women: Trafficking in Women and Girls: Report of the Secretary-General*, U.N. GAOR, 53rd Sess., Agenda Item 103, Sept. 1998.

[3] Vanessa von Struensee, *Globalized, Wired, Sex Trafficking in Women and Children*, 7 Murdoch U. Electronic J.L. No. 2 (June 2000).

[4] Pino Arlacchi, UN Director General of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, in Barbara Crossette, *People trafficking on the rise, warns UN*, THE AGE, June 26, 2000, *at* http://www.theage.com/au/cgi-bin.

[5] Michael Specter, *Contraband Women -- A special report. Traffickers' New Cargo: Naive Slavic Women*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 11, 1998.

[6] Irene Jarosewich, *Reports on Trafficking of Women in Europe: Most who Seek Rescue are from Ukraine*, 66 THE UKRANIAN WEEKLY, No. 32, Aug. 9, 1998.

Turkey, according to Ukrainian police investigators, two women were thrown to their deaths from a balcony while six of their Russian friends watched. In Serbia in 1998, an escaped Ukrainian woman reported that a woman who refused to work as a prostitute was beheaded in public.[7] Many will contract sexually transmitted diseases, including the HIV virus. In Cambodia, an estimated 40% of prostitutes are HIV positive.

5. Factors that facilitate trafficking:
   a) Gobalization. Increased economic globalization and privatization has resulted in an increased feminization of poverty, forcing greater numbers of women worldwide to migrate in search of work.[8] As developing countries make the transition to market-based economies, women appear to be left behind economically because of their disparate access to land, education and technology. Furthermore, modern transportation allows traffickers to move their 'product' further, faster and more efficiently.
   b) Lack of government attention: Many countries have weak, un-enforced, or no laws against trafficking in human beings, often making it less risky and more profitable to criminal groups than drug or arms trafficking.[9] In addition, government officials are frequently directly responsible for such acts of violence as purchasers and abusers women and children.[10] Other times, the government of a State knowingly tolerates or approves of a social pattern of widespread violence against women, making the government indirectly responsible for the violence. In Cambodia, some policemen receive about $11 per month from each brothel to ignore it.[11] The Global Survival Network documented government officials' involvement in trafficking women from Russia.[12]
   c) Poverty: In Cambodia, 13-15 year old virgins cost $500 for three days, or $600 for a week.[13] After she loses her virginity, her value falls under $100. To maintain their premiums, some girls have been 'stitched up' several times to appear as virgins, forced to take clients before they are fully healed so that the bleeding can be attributed to her hymen breaking.[14]

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[7] Specter, *supra* note 5.
[8] Von Struensee, *supra* note 3.
[9] Specter, *supra* note 5.
[10] Kay Johnson, *Pedophile Playground*, TIME (Asia), Nov. 13, 2000. See also Vong Sokheng, *Officials turn blind eye to child trafficking*, PHNOM PHEN POST, Aug.4-17, 2000.
[11] Braema Mathi, *Khmer Kids of the Night*, THE STRAITS TIMES (Singapore), July 16, 2000.
[12] Gillian Caldwell, Steven Galster, and Nadia Steinzor, Global Survival Network, *Crime & Servitude: An Exposé of the Traffic in Women for Prostitution from the Newly Independent States*, a report presented at an international conference on "The Trafficking of NIS Women Abroad," Moscow, Russia, Nov. 3-7 (1997), *cited in* Von Struensee, *supra* note 3.
[13] Joe Cochrane, *Wealthy clients demand virgins for 'safe sex'*, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, Nov. 6, 1999.
[14] *Virgin Ruse*, THE STRAITS TIMES (Singapore), July 16, 2000.

d) Culture: Pervasive attitudes devaluing women and girl children encourage a social climate allowing females to be victimized while discouraging efforts at trafficking prevention.

6. Although trafficking in persons is being addressed in a number of different fora under topics which include discrimination against women, violence against women, contemporary forms of slavery, violence against migrant workers, labor rights for migrants, women and children, and most recently, transnational organized crime, and despite the several conventions, protocols, and resolutions rebuking trafficking and the factors that facilitate it, the trade continues to flourish with astounding success.

Conclusions and Recommendations

7. As long as trafficking in women and children remains such a lucrative trade, traffickers and offenders will continue to supply their "product." HRA urges receiving countries to not only assist supplying countries in alleviating conditions making persons vulnerable to traffickers, but also focus on consumers within their own countries. If demand is lessened, traffickers will have less incentive to supply the "product." HRA asks governments to add information programs directed at consumers regarding the health, safety and social risks of purchasing trafficked victims to supplement their current anti-trafficking efforts.

8. HRA commends Member States' signing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and requests that the Commission urge speedy ratification and effective domestic implementation of both the Convention and Protocol. HRA also encourages dialogue on the General Assembly's proposed international instrument against corruption to include thorough attention to entrenched attitudes de-valuing women and girl children.[15]

[15] Mention of the proposed anti-corruption instrument was mentioned in UN Press Release L/T/4359, 15 Dec. 2000.

9. HRA commends the work of Special Rapporteur on violence against women on her work on trafficking in women and children, and encourages governments to accept her recommendation to implement the "Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons."[16] HRA also recommends that the Commission clarify the mandate of the Special Rapporteur to include the authority to take urgent action to address allegations of specific violations and to investigate reliable allegations of governmental inaction with respect to those claims.

10. HRA reiterates the need to coordinate monitoring and information dissemination mechanisms and commends regional efforts to this end. HRA commends groups such as the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking in Women and Children, working to uncover and eliminate gender discrimination and syndicates that facilitate trafficking in women and children.

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[16] "Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons" is a joint product of the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women in Bangkok (GAATW), the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women in Utrecht (STV) and the International Human Rights Law Group in Washington (IHRLG).